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A

SERMON

PREACHED at

WHITE-HALL,

Before the

KING and QUEEN,

On the 29th of *April*, 1691.

BEING THE

FAST-DAY.

By the Right Reverend Father in God, *GILBERT*,
Lord Bishop of *SARUM.*

LONDON:
Printed for Ric. Chiswell, at the *Rose* and *Crown* in
St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. MDCXCI.

The Bishop of *SARUM*'s

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PSAL. xii. 1.

Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaſeth; the faithful fail from among the children of men.

THE unlooked-for Turns of *David's* Life afford us one of the moſt diverſified and nobleſt Scenes of Hiſtory; From the loweſt condition of following *the Ewes great with young*, which yet was the moſt Innocent, as well as perhaps the Happieſt part of his life; he was advanced to be the Glorious Champion and Deliverer of his Countrey; he was raiſed to be the People's Favourite, as well as the King's Son-in-law: He had a ſecret Intail of the Crown ſetled on him by a Divine Appointment; and ſaw the Affections of his Countrey concurring with the Prophet's Deſignation: He was by their indiſcreet Applauſes, ſet ſo far above *Saul*, as to give him juſt cauſe of Jealouſie; and he found, that bleſſing and Succeſs followed him in every thing that he went about. But a Reverſe of Fortune quickly overtook him; he was purſued by a violent and a jealous Tyrant; forſaken by his Friends and

informed against by Flatterers; and at last forced to secure himself, by entertaining about him such a company as ran to him for Shelter and Protection; who when they found themselves in great distress, were sometimes talking of Stoning him. Only the Great and Generous *Jonathan*, who of all others was the most concerned to have destroyed him, gave upon this occasion, the perfectest Pattern of Heroick Friendship, and was ready even to sacrifice himself for him, whose Fortunes and Fame could not rise, but upon the ruins of his own. In this cloudy Revolution of *David*'s Affairs, it is probable that this Psalm was Penned, when all the Prospect that he once had, seemed to fail; which obliged him to flye to the *Divine Help*, since he found neither Piety nor Truth left among men, to which he could trust. It was no faintness of heart, nor want of Courage, that brought him under this dejection of Mind: His heart was as the heart of a Lion; yet he could expect little from a Body of men, that had neither Religion nor Virtue among them: It is true, they flattered him, and boasted perhaps both of their Zeal and Valour; *They speak vanity with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak* [illegible] *things*; boasting, perhaps, their mighty Performances and their great Services. Whatsoever they might do with their hands, they were sure, that *with their*

tongue

ngues they would prevail: They were alſo liberal in their diſcourſes, they thought their *lips were their own*, and they ſaid, *Who is lord over us?* For tho their perſons might be under his Authority, they reſolved their Tongues ſhould be under no reſtraint: His Enemies were inſolent and fierce, oppreſſing the poor and needy, adding the haughtineſs of Scorn, to the cruelty of Malice: But the poor, while thus oppreſſed, ſighed and cried to God, who as *David* believed, would at laſt *ariſe, and ſet them at ſafety from him that puffed at them*; and in concluſion, he was neither terrified with the ſtrength of his Enemies, nor with the weakneſs of his own Party; he truſted to the Promiſes of God, which he knew had not that allay of droſs, that was in the words of men; they were *pure words*, free from all mixture, exactly true; like Silver after it has paſſed through the ſevereſt refinings; and therefore ſince God had promiſed to raiſe him up to reign over his People, he was confident this would be performed; and ſure the Promiſe was made to him, and to his Poſterity; he was perſuaded he ſhould not only be *preſerved from that generation of his enemies*, but that his Poſterity ſhould be *preſerved for ever*. This he concludes with a dark Phraſe, *The wicked walk on every ſide, when the vileſt men are exalted*; which is capable of this ſenſe, That when *David* and his Followers, who were then under much

ſcorn,

scorn, should be exalted, according to the Prom
that God had made, this should so confou
wicked, that had both despis'd them and their hop
that they should be struck with admiration and g
dinesse upon it, like men that are staring at a stra
sight, and going round it, to view it on all sides.

I now come to consider more closely my Te
which is a Prayer of *David's* to God for *Help*, on t
ground, That there was little or no Religion or ho
nesty left among men; and that therefore he had
reason to trust to them, or to expect a Blessing
such Instruments; on the contrary, he had all reas
to expect heavy Judgments from God upon them
and therefore he prayed to him for help. In Spea
ing to this, I shall consider,

1. What is the Importance of the two Char
cters here given, *Godly* and *Faithful men*.

2. The Reasons that he might then have, a
that we now have, to lament, That there are fe
men of that Character to be found.

3. The sad Consequences that are justly to be a
pprehended to a Nation or Interest, that is under suc
a destitution of Religious and Honest Men.

And 4*thly*, The only Remedy to all this, whic
is an earnest Prayer to God for *Help*.

Follo

Follow me in these things, with that closeness of Thought, and that fixt seriousness of Mind, which the Importance of the Matter, and the Solemnities of the Day do require.

To return to the two Characters of Men in my Text. The word rendred *Godly*, in its strict signification imports a benign, gentle, and good-natured man; but this has such a relation to Religion, and is such a disposition to it, that among the *Jews* this word was in common use extended to a man that was exact to all the duties of Religion, and strict in the performance of them. A *Godly man* is not one that places his Religion in many assumed practices, that look solemn perhaps, but in their own nature do not tend to make him better; that are matters of mere Shew and Pomp, which do begin with Superstition, that is an over-doing and over-valuing indifferent things, and end in Hypocrisie, Faction, and ill-nature. A *Godly man* is not he that understands his Religion well, that can write, speak, and argue closely for it, and that can make both himself and others very angry about it, which is the true name for the greatest part of that which the world calls *Zeal*. In a word; A *Godly man* is not he that is very regular in all outward Rules, and matters of Form, and that places his Religion in the exact performance of such a circle of things, which are the ex-

ternal acts of Religious Worship, and in which a man may go the round very punctually, through a course of many years, and yet never deserve the Character of a *Godly man*. He that is truly the *Godly man*, is he that has an inward sense of a Supreme Power that is over him, that made and governs the world, and all things in it; that is infinitely wise and good, and perfectly pure and holy; that sees all things, and that will judg all men for every thing they do, at a great Tribunal, where there shall be no respect of persons; where all men, even the greatest, shall be set on the level with the meanest; and where every one shall give an account of himself to God, and shall receive according to what he hath done in this life. A *Godly man* is he on whose mind the sense of these things has so deeply seized, that he studies, above all things, to resemble that Being as much as he can, and to raise his nature to be as perfect, as wise, and as good, as he can make it; he endeavours to govern all his Actions in a conformity to the Will and Laws of God; he rejoices when he does those things that he knows are well-pleasing to him; and is much troubled, when the frailties of his Nature, and the force of Temptations, carry him to any thing that offends God. A *Godly man* is he that does so firmly believe, that God by his Providence watches over all things, that he

he does in all his ways reſign himſelf up to his Will, and ſubmits to every thing that comes to him from that hand: And in ſum; A *Godly man* is he that does always acknowledg God; that rays to him for every good thing that he deſires, and chiefly for the Inward Aſſiſtances of his Grace, to reform and purifie his Nature, and that bleſſes God for every good thing that he receives: When this *Godly man* prays to God either in private or publick, he does it with ſo ſerious a temper of Mind, and ſuch a bent of thoughts, that he plainly perceives in himſelf, that what he does, is not the effect of habit or cuſtom, but riſes out of an apprehenſion of his own neceſſities, and of the Fulneſs and Goodneſs of God: This is the Character of him that is truly *Godly*; who conſiders not Religion as an Engine to impoſe fears or hopes on the weaker part of mankind, as the moſt effectual way of governing them; nor does amuſe himſelf with Speculations or Diſputes about it, as a notional and dry matter; that does not conſider it as the Cement of Parties, to form and advance low or baſe Intereſts, but conſiders it as a deſign to form in a man new Principles, out of which a new Nature may grow; but ſuch a nature as will make him the beſt, the amiableſt, the uſefulleſt, and the perfecteſt creature that he can poſſibly be in this life, and that puts him

in a certain way to be vaſtly more pure and perfect in another ſtate. This man directs all his Studies and Practices in Religion, to the advancing of theſe Principles within himſelf; and he gives the world ſo lovely a view of his Religion, by what they ſee in him, that he does thereby promote it more effectually, than all the moſt Learned Diſputers, or moſt Eloquent Perſuaders can poſſibly do. And to advance this Character to the next Branch of it, A *Godly man* is certainly a *Faithful man*; for he that has a true ſenſe of Religion in him, knows that *God is true*, and that in him there is no Lye nor Deceit; *that he abhors the deceitful man, and will deſtroy him that ſpeaks lies*. His Religion, when it is true and unſophiſticated, works him up to ſuch a purity of Mind, that he always ſpeaks *the Truth as it is in his heart*. His belief of the Eye of God that ſees through him, to which all things *are naked and opened*, and that *will bring every ſecret thing* to Judgment, obliges him to a ſeverity in the matters of Truth, that will ſhut out not only plain downright Lying and Falſhood, but that will raiſe him above all little and diſingenuous arts and practices, to ſuch a pitch of Candor and Sincerity, that every man who has any concerns with him, will ſoon ſee what he is to truſt to, or to depend on. A *Faithful man* is he that hates both Lies and Liars, and ſcorns thoſe baſe

Pſal. 5. 6. Pſal. 15. 2. Eccle. 12. 14.

baſe and unworthy methods of Slander and Calumny; he deceives no man; he may and often ought to uſe decent and prudent Reſerves; but in what he ſays and profeſſes, he is exact often to keep within the Truth, but never to go beyond it: He is true in his Actions, as well as in his words; He is juſt in all the Commerce of Life, upright in all Dealings, punctual in performing Agreements and Promiſes, but ſlow in making many, becauſe in theſe he may often forget; but the World, that cannot know that to be true, will be apt to impute that failure rather to a want of Sincerity, than of Memory; for when any thing is liable to two ſorts of Judgments, the one mild, and the other ſevere; the ill natured and falſe part of Mankind, which is always by much the greateſt, will ever paſs the worſt Conſtruction that can be made. A man that has either the ſenſe of truth in himſelf, or the ſenſe of the abſolute neceſſity of it to all Human Societies, for maintaining the Commerce and Confidence of Mankind, will upon other Principles beſides thoſe that ariſe out of Religion, ſoon ſee the beauty of Truth, and find the Indiſpenſible Obligations that lie on him to love, and to practiſe it: yet all theſe are but feeble Ties, in compariſon with thoſe that ariſe out of true Religion, which has a deeper and more certain operation for the

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belief of the Allſeeing Eye of God, and of the Judgments to come; are Reſtraints of another nature, than all thoſe which ariſe out of other Conſiderations; a Man *may* be true and faithful, I confeſs, tho he has not much Religion; but he *muſt* be true and faithful if he has it: Beſides that, a Religious Man will be always true and faithful; whereas he that is not ſo, will be, perhaps, true in the ordinary and more obvious parts of his Life; but when he thinks Art and Management a little neceſſary, and that he can avoid a diſcovery, he will diſpenſe with all Obligations, and allow himſelf great Liberties. Here we have in two words the Character of ſuch Men in whom Princes might well truſt, and from whom they might expect a good Account of all their Affairs. A truly Godly, and a ſincerely honeſt Man, is the Support of a Throne, and the Security of a State; and as there is a ſecret Bleſſing about him watching over him, directing and proſpering him in all his ways; ſo there are Charms in him which attract the eſteem and love of all that know him: They ſee in him a foundation of Confidence, and they look for every thing that is good from him: *When it goeth well* Prov. 11. 10. *with the Righteous, the City rejoiceth; as well as when the Wicked periſh there is ſhouting.* Set in the ſame light with this, the beſt drawn Pictures of Hero's and

and Conquerors that are void of Religion and Vertue, who are the Plagues and Scourges of Mankind, and you will ſoon ſee how Ghaſtly and Deform they look, compared to thoſe bright Characters with which the Godly and the Faithfull Men ſhine.

I go next to a more Melancholly Subject, which is to be the ſecond Part of my Diſcourſe; *David's* Complaint that the *godly ceaſed, that the faithful failed from among the children of men.* Upon this Subject we find another Pſalm that lies very near this, which carries the matter much further. Not only *godly men ceaſed*, but the Ungodly grew to that pitch, as to *ſay in their heart, that there was no God*; *They were corrupt, they had done abominable works, there was none that did good*; by a Poetical Figure he repreſents God as looking down from Heaven, *to ſee if there was any that did underſtand and ſeek after God.* It is ſome comfort, to hope that even in a general Corruption, there are ſome Men in corners that have *have kept their garments clean*, and that ſtand in the Breach, and keep off God's Wrath from breaking in. Now theſe words ſhut out that ſecret reſerve of hope; for after God is repreſented as thus ſurveying that Nation, the account of the Enquiry is, *They are all* Pſal. 14.

gone

gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doth good, no not one. Not only they did not *call on God* themselves, but they trod upon the Poor, and Oppressed them; *eating them up as one eats bread*; They also reproached the Poor because they trusted in God, which is thus expressed; *You have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his Refuge.* I will go no further into *David*'s Story, to examine upon what grounds it was, that he made the Complaint in my Text: He had the most reason to know it best, and was the most concerned at it. That Nation was God's chosen People, upon whom he had bestowed many signal Blessings; They were the only Nation, then in the World, that was in Covenant with God; they had past under much severe Discipline, for their many Revoltings from God; They were often delivered up into the hands of their Enemies, and were as often upon their Repentance redeemed from them; God raising up many Deliverers, by whom he wrought upon many Occasions a mighty Salvation for them: and very lately God had delivered them out of the hands of the *Philistines*, and had by a happy and well directed cast of a Sling, delivered them from the ter-

ror

rour of a mighty Champion, that according to the way of War in those times, was to be first fought with, that defied the Armies of *Israel*; and was so formidable, that no man could be found that was thought an equal Match to him, till the Pen-man of this Psalm, being animated and assisted by God, did both undertake and succeed in it. The People of *Israel* had at this time none of the best Kings indeed; but *Jonathan* was their Prince: *Jonathan* the Wonder and the Charm of all succeeding Ages: *Jonathan*, that shewed that true Friendship could live in a Court; and that even the Jealousie and Rivalry of a Crown could neither interrupt nor cloud it. *Jonathan* the greatest of Men, because the best and noblest of Friends. Next *Jonathan*, in the Eye of the People, tho before him in the Divine Designation, was *David*, in whom there appeared even then the most Heroical Piety, and the most shining Vertues: tho afterwards the Prosperities of an Established Reign corrupted even these: So hard a thing it is for Piety and Vertue to maintain their Force in a flourishing Court: Yet at this time, and during the course of those Struglings, through which he past, he was the most extraordinary Example that any Age had produced; his Skill in Government, and

his Conduct in War, his Successes and Victories, gave him all the Reputation of which a great Prince was capable: But his Piety is even beyond wonder; which appears in his turning himself upon all occasions to God, and in his composing the greatest Collection of Inspired Hymns that ever was made: in which the flights of raised Thoughts, and the tenderness of melting Devotions, have made a mixture, that has been the constantest and the pleasantest Entertainment of the Pious in all Ages. No part either of the *Jewish* Story, or of his own, and no accident of his Life, none of the depressions or elevations of his Fortune have scaped him; but upon all these a Soul that was ever on the Wing, takes its flights towards Heaven, and in these he has left us the chief Helps of raising all that have come after him thither-ward ever since. That Nation that had so many Advantages, and such Helps, such Laws, and such Patterns, as it had much to answer for, so it had much to apprehend when it fell under so general a Corruption.

And now I leave the History of that Nation to come and observe the present State of our own. *Ah, tell it not in Gath!* where are *the Godly and the Faithful Men?* are they all gone into the Generations

ons of their Fathers? or are they as invisible as the Seven thousand men were in *Elijah*'s time; who tho they had not bowed their Knee to *Baal*, yet were so hid, and so little known, that even the Prophet thought he was the only Man that was left that had not defiled himself with that Idolatry? Are we without a Remnant? Are there not Ten Righteous Men left, for whose sake God may be moved to spare and deliver us? Is there not a Man among us according to *Jeremy*'s Words? Are all gone aside? Is there none that doth good, no not one? Where is the Piety and Devotion, the Zeal for Religion, and the Holiness becoming it, that was was once the Strength, as well as the Glory of this Nation? Where is the Truth and Honesty, the common Morality and Probity that must be the Strength of every Nation? Have these things all left us? and have we only a Name, that we live, while we are truly dead? We are now pretending to Fast and Pray; and to humble and afflict our Souls before God; but are any of us looking inward, and saying within our selves, *What have we done? are we those that have troubled our* Israel? It is a very easie Thought, which will give us no Pain at all, to accuse the Sins of the Nation in general, and more particularly the Sins

of others: Theſe we may be apt enough to aggravate both in our Thoughts and Diſcourſes: for naturally all Men are partial to themſelves, and ſharp upon others. But then do we truly humble our ſelves before God, when we ſearch our own Hearts and Ways, when we confeſs our own Sins, with all the grief of Heart and confuſion of Face that belongs to us for them; with the firmeſt Reſolutions, and the moſt Solemn Vows of forſaking them. And that we may the better be directed to make a ſevere Enquiry, let us reflect a little on the Two Characters in my Text, and ask our own Hearts, which will anſwer us truly if the Queſtion is right put, Whether are we of the ſmall and deſpiſed number of thoſe that are truly Godly and Faithful or not? Have we a Senſe of God dwelling much upon our Hearts? Is his Fear much before our Eyes? Does this Principle make us do or forbear many things, that we would not do or forbear without it? Do we accuſtom our ſelves often to reflect on the Works and Ways of God? Do we acknowledge his Providence, depend upon it, and in all things ſubmit to it? Do we often conſider that he ſees and obſerves all we do, and that he will call us to give an Account of it at the laſt Day? Do we often

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pour out our Souls before him in earneſt Prayer? Are we ſo ſenſible of our Frailty and Miſery, that we cry mightily to God for Mercy and Grace? Do we often Implore the Aſſiſtances of his Holy Spirit, and bleſs him for all the good things that we receive at his Hands? Do we often in our Prayers to him intercede for all Mankind; and more particularly for the Church and Nation to which we do belong? Do we in our ſecret Addreſſes to the Throne of Grace, make mention of thoſe whom God in his merciful Providence has ſet over us? Do we implore a Bleſſing upon their Perſons and Government, upon their Counſels and Undertakings? Do we upon theſe Solemn Days join our Secret Devotions with the Publick Offices? and are we ſeriouſly affected with the State and the Dangers of our Religion? Do we rejoice in the Publick Acts of Religious Worſhip? Do we aſſiſt in them with our Hearts, as well as with our Perſons? Have we a Witneſs within us that can anſwer all theſe Queſtions? or muſt not we, to deal truly with our ſelves, acknowledge that we are Strangers to them all; and that tho Religion is a Name of ſo decent a ſound, that we dare not directly attack it; yet in our Hearts we wiſh there were no ſuch thing in the World:

World: we are weary of it, and if we cannot conveniently throw off the very Name and Appearances of it; yet we take care to let all the World ſee, that in our Account it is no more than a Name. If then the much greater part of Mankind live as if there were no ſuch thing as Religion in all their Thoughts, unleſs it be to abuſe and profane it. If the whole courſe of their Lives ſhew, that they have ſaid in their Hearts *That there is no God;* then we have but too much Reaſon to cry out, *Help, Lord, for the Godly man ceaſeth.* And alas there is but too much reaſon to add, and *the faithful faileth from among the children of men*: and that the whole Charge
Hoſea 4. 1. of the Prophet belongs too truly to us, *that there is no mercy, no truth, nor knowledge of God in the land,* while every Man is ready to cheat and deceive his Neighbour, to flatter him with the Shews and Profeſſions; and perhaps the Oaths and Proteſtations of Kindneſs; while in his Heart he hates him, and endeavours to undermine him; while Calumny and Slander are the moſt common Heads of Diſcourſes; while no truſt can be given to what is ſaid, and almoſt as little regard to what is ſworn; while it is one of the Arts of Converſation to affirm things which are known to be falſe, and to promiſe things which are not intended to be obſerved; while all theſe things

things are ſo common among us, Where is that Truth in the inward Parts which God loves? Where is the Probity and Fidelity that is practiſed among many Heathen Nations, with ſo Religious a Simplicity, that the very Name of *Chriſtianity* is blaſphemed among them? When the Chriſtians that go from us, and carry with them thoſe Qualities that they had learned in theſe Parts, are for this very reaſon thought to have a falſe Religion, becauſe they are ſo impudent in the practiſes of Falſhood and Diſſimulation. And while we reproach the Church of *Rome* with the Doctrines of Equivocation, as the Arts and Diſguiſes of Falſhood, the greater part among our ſelves practiſe theſe things in ſo bare-faced a manner, as if they were angry only at the dreſſing up and diſguiſing of them, and reſolved to practiſe a more honeſt Falſhood, would avowedly practiſe that which the others teach us to do covertly. Ah, if according to the threatning, God would *cut off all lying Lips*, under what a deſolation ſhould our Cities and Countries, our Courts and Camps be quickly brought; it would deſtroy us faſter than Famines, Plagues, or Wars could do.

And this leads me to the Third part of my Diſcourſe; which is to conſider the dangerous and almoſt deſperate State of a Nation, in which *Godly*

and

and Faithful men do fail. It is dangerous by reason of the natural Effects that must needs follow on such a Corruption, besides the Judgments of God that it must draw down upon a Nation. Where Men are no more restrained by the Principles of Religion, they naturally give themselves up to their Pleasures or Interests: this makes them both feeble and effeminate, base and treacherous. When inward Restraints are taken off, Nature must break out, and undisciplined Appetites and Passions must work the Dissolution of Society and Government; especially where Liberty is preserved, and Law bears sway. Absolute Governments may be restrained and maintained at the pleasure of a severe Prince: But a legal and free Government cannot stand long against an Inundation of Vice and Impiety. So that here Religion becomes Indispensably necessary, even for the Preservation of the Constitution: For how can Men live long together in any tolerable Order and Quiet, if neither the Fear of God, nor the Awe of Man restrains them. The censures of the Law fall only upon some enormous Crimes, but the corruption of Mens Morals and Principles, cannot be reached in a Government that is exactly legal. Therefore such a Constitution must either be fortified by Religion, otherwise it must turn feeble and fall into

into Decay, and in Fact we ſee that no free Government was over-run with Tyranny, till the Minds of the People, by the abuſe of their Liberty, were corrupted with Senſuality. This blunts Induſtry, and raiſes the Expence beyond the Income, which muſt quickly bring Ruin after it. The Expence of Vice muſt be ſupported with Extortion and Oppreſſion, Corruption and Bribery. The ravenous Men of Pleaſure, as they do little for the Publick, ſo they think they can never rob it enough. The Love of the Publick, and of ones Country, which is the Root of the moſt generous Actions, of which the Nature of Man is capable, ſinks in a Man diſſolved into Pleaſure, or ſold to Intereſt. A noble contempt of Life, which gives an Heroical Courage, that is the chief Inſtrument of the Preſervation of a Nation, has no true Foundation but in Religion. Not to fear Death, in one that has reaſon to believe there is a black Immortality that comes after it, is Madneſs, and an unthinking Extravagance, and not a true and ſetled Courage. Whereas to him that has a good Conſcience, that truſts in God and ſerves him, and that has reaſon to believe that he ſhall be for ever happy in another World, Death cannot be terrible, but may be thought on, and ventured

on with an undaunted firmneſs of Mind. The want of Truth deſtroys all Confidence and Kindneſs among Men, without which Societies are but as Ropes of Sand. Men can neither truſt a falſe Man, nor love him; and what ſtrength can there be in any Government, where there are no Foundations for theſe? It would be too invidious to bring all theſe things, that have been ſaid in general, nearer us, and to obſerve how far they belong to us. Alas, the Matter is but too plain, and needs no enlargement. What pains has been taken among us, to laugh out of our Minds the ſenſe both of Religion and Vertue? Theſe have long paſs'd for things of the old World, that are now out of faſhion. And it is but too viſible, that the Heat which many ſhewed ſome time ago for preſerving their Religion, flowed from any Principle rather than Affection to it, or Zeal for it; ſince they do now ſhew ſo little concern for it, and live ſo little ſuitably to it. Ah, have we our Religion for no other end, but to be laugh'd at and deſpiſed by ſome, while it is made by others only matter of Paſſion and Faction? Where are the moſt common Vertues of ordinary Heathens? Are Honeſty and Truth, Sobriety and Chaſtity, Mercy and Charity, Generoſity and good Nature, only ſo many

many ſplendid Names of Qualities that are to be admired in the Men of former Ages, while they are deſpiſed in the preſent? And what can we think of our ſelves, when that which is the Root and Spring of all other Political Vertues, the Love of our Country, and a Zeal for the Publick, is ſo viſibly ſacrificed to private Intereſts and Paſſions? Theſe things do as certainly diſſolve the Strength of a Nation, as Pallies or Gouts do the Strength of a Body. But as ſo univerſal a Degeneracy does by its own Operation weaken a Nation, ſo it draws down heavy Judgments from Heaven upon it. Every Man's Indignation againſt faulty Perſons, encreaſes in proportion to the Favours that have been ſhewed, but deſpiſed by the Offenders. The Judgments of God upon the Jewiſh Nation, and upon the Roman Empire, are things ſo generally known, that I preſume it is not neceſſary to enlarge much upon them: The Inſtances of paſt-times are perhaps at too great a diſtance from us to affect us as they ought to do. But in our own Age, do not we ſee how God has ariſen to *ſhake the whole Earth terribly*, and that his Judgments have been going round the whole Compaſs of *Europe*, while we, as if we had been the priviledged Corner of the World, have indeed heard

of these things, and seen them at a distance, but have not yet felt them? How many Protestant Churches have been plucked up by the Roots? How terribly have many others been shattered and next to ruined? What Scenes of Blood and Destruction, of Burning and Vastation, have the *Netherlands*, the *Rhine*, and *Hungary*, been now in a course of twenty Years, with very little interruption? And not to go out of the Precincts of this Crown, What a Field of Blood, of Death and Desolation, has *Ireland* been, and alas still is? And yet all this while none of these dreadful Things have broke in upon us. We do indeed feel them a little in our Purses; but ah, how light is this Burden compared to that which others bear, whose Persons and Houses, their Estates and whole Stock, are every day exposed, not only to the Fury of their Enemies, but even to the Violences of those that ought to be their Friends; for in all Wars it is but too common, that Countries suffer almost equally from both Sides. And if one should judg of that easy share of Taxes which we bear in so terrible a Convulsion of all *Europe*, by the Prodigality and Luxury, the Gaming, the Playhouses, and the other extravagant Expences that are still among us, one would conclude that

Men

Men are not much pinched, when there is ſo much left for Vanity and Pleaſure. A moderate Frugality would do more than pay Taxes. And when Men grudg their Religion and their Country, the ſacrificing that to it which they had better be without, tho that were not in the Caſe, it muſt be concluded that they have no great regard for either the one or the other. But while we ſee that God's Judgments are abroad in the Earth, why ſhould we flatter our ſelves ſo far as to think that they ſhould never come near us? or rather on the other hand, why ſhould we not conclude, that the ſeeming partiality of his Providence hitherto to us-ward, will be fully cleared by the ſeverity of his Judgments, when he ſhall think fit to let them looſe upon us? For certainly, the longer they are delayed, they will fall the heavier at the laſt: If neither the Light we enjoy, nor the Deliverance that has been almoſt as miraculouſly, tho more ſlowly carried on and maintained amongſt us, as it was at firſt given to us; if neither the Miſeries of others, nor our own extream Dangers; if neither the great Inſtructions that are given us, nor the ſhining Examples that are ſet before us can reclaim us, but that we will ſtill go on, and ſin with a high hand, then what remains for us but to cry, *Help Lord, for the godly Man ceaſeth, the Faithful*

Faithful fail from among the Children of Men? The more reaſon that we have to apprehend Judgments from God for our own Sins, we have ſtill the more reaſon to redouble our moſt earneſt Prayers to him, *Help Lord*: If God do not help us, for his own great Name's-ſake, and for the ſake of that ſmall number of Interceſſors that we hope are ſtill among us, the cry of whoſe Prayers may be more effectual, than the loud Cries of the multitudes of Sinners; we ſee before our Eyes, all that can be formidable to Men, who have any regard, either to their Souls or Bodies, to their Eſtates or their Poſterity; if God ſhould now withdraw his Help, and abandon us, there is nothing that the moſt melancholy and affrighted Imagination can ſet before us, that can riſe up to the Miſeries that we ſhall moſt certainly fall under. That ſmall but much-boaſted *Earneſt* of **burning upon our Coaſt** laſt Year, was the true Sample of what we may then look for: Waſting and Deſtruction muſt walk over the Land as a Flood ſweeping all before it. And as we have no defended Cities, nor Paſſes to ſtop the Fury of a enraged Enemies, if they can but once break in upon us; ſo the Intereſt they have to make this Nation a heap of Ruins, and the particular Rage with which their Spirits are whetted againſt us,

us, and the Fury of their Prieſts, the Outragiouſneſs of their Souldiery, and above all the Barbarity of the Counſels that direct them, give us the certaineſt grounds of apprehending utter Deſtruction. If they have uſed the Countries of their own Religion ſo as they have done, where there has been neither Faith kept, nor Mercy ſhewed; then we may juſtly apply theſe words of our Saviour to our ſelves, *If theſe things be done in the green Tree, what ſhall be done in the Dry?* If ever God for our Sins deliver us up to ſuch a devouring Calamity, then theſe will be the only happy Men of the Nation, who are now thought the moſt impardonable; for they will quickly fall Sacrifices to the Rage of their Enemies, and will not endure the lingring Torment of ſeeing and feeling the Miſeries of their Country, in which all muſt periſh at laſt; for late Inſtances, but feeble Ones in compariſon to thoſe diſmal things that are before us, if thoſe black Days ſhould come upon us, may have taught thoſe unnatural Proteſtants and unnatural Engliſhmen, that would be at firſt inſulting upon the Ruin of their Country, that they would be very ſoon looked on as the worſt of Enemies, if they ſhould afterwards pretend but to think of preſerving the Religion and the Laws. This is but a ſmall part of

that

that dismal Catastrophe which we must look for, if God should deal with us as our Sins have deserved at his Hands. And are not all these powerful Arguments to press us to call on God mightily for his Help? Can we look on tamely when so much is at Stake? Can we be indifferent, when no less than the Destruction of our Country, the Loss of our Religion, and the Ruin of the whole Reformed Side all *Europe* over, is the Judgment which threatens us, if God is not appeased, and his Wrath turned away by a serious Repentance and a true Reformation, without which the utmost fervour of our Prayers is but the heat of Imagination, and can signify nothing? The barbarous hatred which we lie under, from those who pretend to be of the same Religion with us, is somewhat extraordinary; but the stupid and unconcerned Indifferency of those who are, or at least seem to be, with us, is yet in some respects more amazing, who perhaps look on all that is doing as if it were other Mens Work and not their own; as if it were only done for the Establishing of the Throne of our Princes, and not for the Preservation and Happiness of the Nation; and as if the Quarrel were personal and not national. We have Princes who shew us but too often how regardless they are of their own Persons,

ſons, and how much they conſider the Publick: and who can neither be kept from the Danger nor the Fatigue of Campagnes; when, to the laſting Reproach of the Youth of the Nation, ſo many chooſe to loiter it away at Home in Luxury and Effeminacy, rather than go and learn how to defend their Country, and ſhew that they have the Zeal and Affection for their Religion, their King and their Country, which becomes their Blood, and the Rank that they hold in it. They deceive themſelves, who think that the preſent Quarrel is any other than *Religion* and *England*. While then all is ſtruck at, why are not all concerned, ſince every Man muſt bear his ſhare in the Iſſue? Shall thoſe that go out in our Armies and Fields; and with all dutiful Reverence be it ſaid, ſhall his Majeſty alone carry away the whole Honour of preſerving and ſaving the Nation? Have we who ſtay at Home no Ambition to ſhare with them in it? If we go on in our Sins, we are fighting againſt them behind them, while they have a powerful Enemy in Head: but if we are Faſting and Praying while they are Marching and Fighting, there will be in this a ſtrong Reſerve, and a mighty Supply ſent to them. We have on our Side the juſteſt Cauſe that ever any Nation engaged in: we have alſo on our

Side the Sighs of many poor and needy Perſons, who have been made miſerable by the Treachery and Cruelty of our Enemies: So that according to the words of this *Pſalm*, we may hope that *for the Oppreſſion and Sighing of the Poor and Needy, God will now ariſe and ſet him in ſafety from him that puffeth at him.* The Cry of all that Innocent Blood that has been ſhed in a courſe of many Years unjuſt Wars, and cruel Perſecution, does all ſtand of our Side. If then we join to theſe true Repentance and earneſt Prayers, we may juſtly hope that they ſhall be heard, that *God will ariſe, lift up his Strength, and come and ſave us.* It will be but a very light part of the War, if we lay upon our ſelves an Obligation of offering up every day ſome Petitions to God with relation to it, if we raiſe our Fervor a little higher once a Week, and if we obſerve the monthly Faſt with that ſolemn ſtrictneſs which becomes ſo important an Occaſion, this will upon the whole Matter bear a greater ſhare in our Preſervation than our prophane Libertines can underſtand. God is a hearer of Prayer, and this will be *a continuance in it, and a watching thereunto*; according to the Apoſtle's Phraſe, That our Prayers may go up before God *as Incenſe*, we muſt *cleanſe our Hearts, and waſh our Hands*: we muſt *put away from us the evil of our ways*,

ways, and entertain nothing within us, by which *our Prayers may be hindred*: for *as the effectual fervent Prayers of the Righteous avail much, ſo the Prayers of the Wicked are Sin. If we regard Iniquity in our Hearts, God will not hear us*, but both we and our Prayers ſhall be an Abomination to him.

Let us then pray, and pray earneſtly to God, that he may go forth with our Fleets and Armies; and above all, that he may direct and bleſs, preſerve and reſtore to us him that is *the Light of our Eyes, and the Breath of our Noſtrils*, the only viſible Support, not only of theſe Nations, but of Religion and Liberty in general: and that has hitherto been in ſo peculiar a manner the care of Heaven, that nothing but our Sins can make us doubt but that Angels will ſtill encamp about him, and watch over him. Let us alſo pray, that the Partner of his Crown and Throne may have the ſame gracious Protection hovering over Her, enlightning and proſpering all her Counſels; and that this preſent Separation that our common Preſervation makes neceſſary, may be of a ſhort continuance, and have a glorious Concluſion; that this our Faſt may end in Days of Joy and Thankſgiving, that we may be quiet and ſafe at Home, and his Majeſty glorious and victorious Abroad; that inſtead

of

of Wars, and Rumours of Wars, which do so often endanger that Life, which is the best part of ours, we may see those desirable and happy Days, in which according to the prophetick Phrase, *The Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid; and the Calf and the young Lion shall lie down together, and a little Child shall lead them.* That so our Princes being no more distracted with the more pressing and necessary Care of our Preservation, may be able to attend more entirely to that which they do so earnestly desire, the raising up the true Lustre of this Church and State, by reviving all those Vertues which were the Ancient Glories of this Nation; and reforming all those Abuses and Disorders which the Luxury of latter Times have let in among us. May They live and prosper, and may every Year be a new Scene of Glory to Them, an Encrease of Triumph, and a Progress of Victory, and let all the People say, *Amen.*

Isa. 11. 6.

FINIS.